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TEXT OF CIA HEADQUARTERS CABLE DATED 17 APRIL

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2. SINCE LAST WEEK OF MARCH, WHEN LAOTIAN ARMY SUFFERED SERIOUS REVERSE WITH ABANDONMENT OF THA THOM UNDER HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE, GOVT MILIT SIT HAS GROWN PROGRESSIVELY WORSE, AND CRITICALLY ADVERSE SIT APPEARS AT HAND.

SOUTH OF PLAINE DES JARRES, KONG LE - PATHET LAO FORCES ARE EXERTING HEAVY PRESSURE ON PRO VIENTIANE MEO GUERRILLAS, WHO ARE EXPOSED SINCE LOSS OF THA THOM. BAN PHA, GOVT POST HELD BY MIXED FAL-MEO TROOPS, WAS TAKEN BY ESTIMATED TWO ENEMY BATTALIONS ON 15 APR. MEO UNITS STILL HOLD SOME HIGH GROUND OVERLOOKING BAN PHA, AND GOVT PLANS ATTEMPT TO RETAKE POST BUT DOUBTFUL THEY WILL SUCCEED. A BATTALION IS TO BE SENT FROM PAK SANE TO REINFORCE AREA, THUS FURTHER EXPOSING PAK SANE TO POSSIBLE ENEMY MOVE SOUTHWARD.

COLLAPSE OF GOVT AIRBORNE OPERATION TO RETAKE MUONG KASSY, IN ADDITION TO DEMONSTRATING AGAIN INEFFECTIVENESS OF PHOUMIS TROOPS WAS SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOW TO VIENTIANE.

IN CENTRAL LAOS, ENEMY APPARENTLY HAS EMBARKED ON CONCERTED EFFORT TO PENETRATE TO MEKONG. FOLLOWING A SUPPLY BUILDUP IN THE KAM KEUT--LAK SAO AREA IN EARLY APRIL, ENEMY MOVED AGAINST NHOMMARAT, GOVTS KEY BLOCKING POSITION AGAINST THE THREAT OF AN ATTACK ON THAKHEK, AND ON 15 APRIL GOVT TROOPS ABANDONED THE POST AFTER RECEIVING 105MM HOWITZER AND 120MM MORTAR FIRE. CONTROL OVER BULK OF THE TROOPS WHO WERE DRIVEN FROM NHOMMARAT HAS NOT YET BEEN REESTABLISHED, AND TROOPS NOW IN THE THAKHEK AREA HAVE LITTLE

TRAINING AND WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO STAND UP TO ARTILLERY FIRE.

IN THE EXTREME SOUTH, ENEMY FORCE ESTIMATED TO NUMBER SEVERAL HUNDRED MEN IS REPORTED (WITHOUT CONFIRMATION) TO HAVE ATTACKED TWO GOVT COMPANIES ON 13 APRIL AT BAN PHA PHO, AN OUTPOST ABOUT 25 MILES FROM CAMBODIAN BORDER. RADIO CONTACT WITH POST HAS BEEN LOST. GOVT COMPANY FROM PAKSE HAS BEEN ORDERED TO REINFORCE AREA.

TOTAL PICTURE PRESENTED BY THESE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS ONE OF CONTINUED PRESSURE AND EXPANDED ACTIVITIES COMBINED WITH LOW MORALE AND GENERAL INEFFECTIVENESS OF GOVT FORCES WHICH ENEMY ONLY TOO QUICK TO EXPLOIT. LAOTIAN ARMY HAS NO RESERVES TO MEET DEVELOPING MILITARY SITUATION, FOR BY SHIFTING OF TROOPS IT ONLY EXPOSES OTHER AREAS.

PHOUMI FREQUENTLY DEPRESSED OVER MILITARY REVERSES ATTRIBUTED BY HIM TO GROWING NORTH VIETNAMESE COOPERATION WITH KONG LE - PATHET LAO FORCES.

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Approved For Release 2006/02/09 : CIA-RDP79S00427A000100050033-8

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Approved For Release 2006/02/09 : CIA-RDP79S00427A000100050033-8